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## The Possibility of Disarmament by International Agreement

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THIS subject would ordinarily require its tackler to be a diplomat and an international lawyer. But our modern democracy, which hesitates at nothing, emboldens me to tackle it without such qualifications. If this were not enough there yet remains the incitement of the impatience of our part of the world at what it considers the flat failure of diplomats and international lawyers to save us from arming for wars. I do not share these extreme opinions about the diplomats and international lawyers. We have no right to expect so much of them. The world can not be run entirely by talk.

By armament, I mean not only the provision of all kinds of arms, but also training for their use whether in the Army or the Navy. Disarmament is to be taken in an equally broad sense to mean the abandonment not only of arms, but also of training in their use. Disarmament shall also mean not only complete disarmament, but any limitation or reduction of armament, because these in the end amount to disarmament.

The one reliable guide and test of the action of men and of nations is history and experience. "What has been, the same shall again be." All other things are mere hopes or speculations; there is no reliance in them.

Coincidence of events or their sequence in time proves no necessary relation between them as cause and effect. They do, nevertheless, strike and impress the human mind. For example, for four or five years before 1914, the advocates and workers for the idea of world peace and disarmament were the

most active and most assuring of results of all time and all history. They had succeeded in inducing the negotiation of a large number of international agreements looking to peace and disarmament. Then, from a clear sky, came the thunder of the worst and most general war of all time. I see today with misgiving a like revival of public interest and activity for a so-called world peace and disarmament.

While to quarrel with one's problem is no solution of it, the statement of our subject, *The Possibility of Disarmament by International Agreement*, seems to imply one or both of two things: that armament is not worth what it cost, and that it brings on war with war's incidental destruction. As to the first (that armament is not worth what it cost), it is to be admitted that if armament is not necessary it is not worth what it costs, no matter how little it costs. It is, however, to be remarked that armament has a definite national purpose, to wit, the protection of the nation against aggression or loss of its rights.

Again, the assumption that armament brings on war with war's incidental destruction is error induced by our irritation at its cost and trouble, and to disarm in the hope of avoiding war is only self-deception. A look into the world and history easily verifies both these statements.

The possibility of disarmament by international agreement depends upon two things: first, the possibility of securing any international agreement whatever on the subject; and second, the sanction or the effectiveness of the means of carrying out the agreement

when obtained. There has hardly ever been a war in history in which each side did not feel and claim that it was forced into it by the other. "Every way of a man seemeth right to him." The extreme difficulty, not to say impossibility, of making men and nations forget or subordinate themselves and their own immediate interests of preservation of self or national rights or of inducing them to surrender any of their self-control for any other consideration whatever, has, thus far in the history of the world, made it impossible for any considerable number of nations to agree at one time upon anything.

Common standards of right are wanting among nations. Even where right is acknowledged, the interests and conditions of states have been so diverse that effective agreement has been impossible. The body of international law represents all the agreement that nations have thus far in all history been able to reach. It is the growth of all historical time, three thousand years or more, and yet it still remains a very weak and puny growth. Not only this, but also only recently has it been willing to include Pagan or Mohammedan nations. Even among Christian nations there is hardly one that does not, even today, hug some petty special reservations and exceptions of its own to the general rule.

At its best, international law, which, I say, in effect represents all the appreciable international agreement that the world has yet attained, is still very limited in quantity, very indefinite and undetermined. Even where they do not deny, the nations often manage to avoid its obligations. We know it. Its sole sanction is the moral sense of nations, and this is so variable and, in many instances, so uninterested as often to leave international law practically without sanction, except the mili-

tary power of the nation arguing it. International law, the only international agreement, stands thus as an example of the extreme difficulty and uncertainty of any international agreement.

Nations, when any beneficent or humane proposals are made them, at first almost invariably declare themselves ready to accept in principle, and then balk completely at the first application of the principle to any specific instance. Our President, the press informs us, unquestionably favors the reduction or limitation of our costly armament; but when finally the question is presented to his government officially, we hear in reply, so says the press, "This is not the time." Great Britain can not reduce because of her position by sea; France can not because of her position by land. Japan can not because of the threat of Russia, and Russia can not because of the threat of the whole world.

Our lately proposed League of Nations, was, in effect, a plan or proposition of disarmament by international agreement. It was made under such conditions of general loss, suffering, sorrow, destruction, hardships and dangers, as would seemingly render acceptance by all as sure. Yet we, America, have completely, overwhelmingly rejected it. Nor is it possible to believe that the nations of the earth, after their long months of recent consideration of the subject, would now be willing to re-open it *de novo*; or, that, if willing to re-open it, they would be likely to reach any different agreement upon it. The meeting has, so to speak, only just adjourned and conditions have not changed.

Judging from history, experience and the varying conditions, views, opinions and standards of nations, the possibility of inducing any considerable number of them to come to any agree-

ment on the subject of disarmament is small. Nevertheless, it is not nil; nothing is impossible. The present desire of the great bulk of mankind everywhere to avoid the heavy cost of armament and the cruel destruction of war, is so great that seemingly it ought to be able to drive their governments to some agreement. Here is encountered one of the great difficulties: The desire of people never, for any length of time, remains the same. If anything is sure, that is sure. Creation and the conditions of life have so made them. If today common desire forced the governments of the world to agreement, tomorrow changing conditions and circumstances would surely have altered the desires of some or lessened their concern in the matter to such an extent that these would no longer be insistent upon their original point of view. Indeed, they might be insistent upon just the opposite point of view. The moral sense of nations and of mankind is not strong enough to hold them. The best international law does not expect it. Such is history, such experience.

International agreements and treaties remain in force and effect only so long as they represent the continued active wishes and live, direct interests of the nations concerned. History of international agreements is full of proofs of the fickleness, lack of continuity of national desires and the consequent untrustworthiness of agreements made under them. The following are a few modern instances: The partition in 1792 of Poland, whose independence had been guaranteed in 1790; the destruction by Great Britain of the Danish fleet at Copenhagen in 1807; the absorption by Japan of Korea, whose independence had been guaranteed by the great powers in 1902; the neglect by the great powers of the Treaty of Berlin, and the annexation by Austria-

Hungary in 1908 of Bosnia and Herzegovina; the neglect by Germany after her promise of the plebiscite in Schleswig-Holstein; Italy's abandonment of her allies of the Triple Alliance in the World War and her siding with the Entente; Germany's violation in 1914 of the neutrality of Belgium, which the Allies that had agreed to it had not prepared to prevent; Germany's violation in the same year of the neutrality of Luxemburg. The list could be prolonged. Changes of national feelings are inevitable if nations and men continue to live. International law, whose body represents practically all the common and unchanging views of nations, shows the limited amount that remains unchanging. Under stress of changed feelings to the contrary, international agreements do not hold men. There has been almost no agreement between nations about armament. On this no two have ever seemed to hold the same views.

Into every proposal of disarmament or other international agreement enter two ingredients: selfishness and altruism. Selfishness to avoid the cost, trouble, suffering and destruction of war to ourselves, and altruism to obviate these for other nations. No advocate or proposer of disarmament will dare to admit that he contends for disarmament solely on the selfish ground. He is driven to add the altruistic. Selfish advantage has, however, so long been almost the sole real moving power of all international proposals, or of such a very large proportion of them, that the world now smiles incredulously, knowingly, at any altruistic allegations in them. They carry no conviction. Indeed, their mere introduction is taken as a warning and a caution. It is the siren's voice to the wise mariner.

The non-armament of the American-Canadian border is often referred to as an example of the possibility of disarm-

ament by international agreement. However much it is a subject of congratulation between the nations concerned, it is utterly without significance as to the possibility of disarmament by international agreement. Popular histories to the contrary notwithstanding, practically every military effort made by either side across this border, whether in colonial, revolutionary or national times, was a failure, resulted in nothing decisive. The decision, whenever there was a decision, was reached by fighting elsewhere, not across this border. If tomorrow we should again come to blows, the results would be the same. Both nations know it.

Under past and present complete liberty of action of nations, with their right and habit of changing their minds at will to fit their changing views and interests, they are in general unwilling to entrust their safety to international agreements and have remained armed for their own protection. However, neither the difficulty nor the improbability nor the unwillingness to reach international agreement for disarmament, argues the impossibility thereof. Against fact there is no arguing, and there actually exists in the world today examples of partial or total disarmament as against each other, based on international agreement between the states concerned, of states that were once separate and independent nations.

But these states are no longer fully sovereign and independent states. One example is found in the British Empire, another in the United States, another in the German Empire. The British Empire does not afford the most marked example of disarmament by

definite international agreement, the states or the colonies which go to compose it having, by custom and use rather than by formal agreement, grown into their present condition. Though partially armed, they are not armed against each other. The United States is a better example of disarmament by agreement of states as against each other by definite international agreement, because when our federal constitution was adopted the different states were practically separate, sovereign nations. Some of them had but recently been at war with each other.

The German Empire is also a good example. Most of the states composing it were, in 1870, separate, sovereign and independent states and came into the Empire by separate treaties. They are effectively disarmed against each other. But the characteristic of the international agreements in all three of these cases has been the surrender of a portion of the sovereignty in each state to a common super-power, and the creation therefrom of a separate entity, a separate and new sovereignty with power and authority to enforce the international agreement upon all. Upon the strength and the reliability of such an entity, of such a super-sovereignty, and upon that alone, can nations be or have they been willing to disarm. However, states that enter such an agreement cease to be states in the full sense of the word.

The possibility of disarmament by international agreement is the nations' affirmative answer to the question "Will you surrender sovereignty and create a super-state above you?" We have just refused.